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ABSTRACT

A study of cross examination speeches of males and females was conducted to determine gender differences in intercollegiate debate. The theory base for gender differences in speech is closely tied to the analysis of dyadic conversation. It is based on the belief that women are less forceful and dominant in cross examination, and will exhibit behavior that is more tentative and less in control. It was hypothesized that women would use more open questions, fewer closed or leading questions, and more tag questions than men. The cross examination periods of 10 Cross Examination Debate Association debates were tape recorded and coded for types of questions and interruptions. The results indicated that men did interrupt more than women during a cross examination period of a debate, and they tended to interrupt women more than men. Women used more open questions than did men, but the hypothesis that men would use more closed or leading questions was not confirmed. In a differences of means test the hypothesis that women use more tag questions was not confirmed. However, in a comparison of both means and percentages, females were found to use nearly twice as many tag questions as the males. (HTH)

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WOMEN'S SPEECH/MEN'S SPEECH: DOES FORENSIC TRAINING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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On October 11, 1984, fifty million television viewers watched Geraldine Ferraro and George Bush clash wits in a much publicized vice-presidential debate held in Philadelphia. The political debate not only held importance for the 1984 presidential election, but it also was the first time a man and a woman nominated for such a high office had met face-to-face in a political debate. The participants in the debate each faced a sticky task of demonstrating their leadership ability, yet at the same time, maintaining an appropriate decorum while debating the opposite sex. On the one hand, Bush could not be too harsh, for if he attacked Ferraro voters would think he was impolite. As one Bush supporter remarked before the debate, "It's very difficult for [Bush] to prevail. Either it looks like [he's] beating up on [Ferraro] or not standing up to her."1 On the other hand, Ferraro needed to appear knowledgeable and presidential. As Congressperson Tony Coelho put it: "She needs to avoid looking bitchy. She can't be shrill. She has to come across as a leader."2

Regardless of the outcome of the 1984 election, the vice-presidential debate raised an important question concerning the difference between male and female speakers. Do men and women adjust their speaking styles when debating the opposite sex? For the Bush/Ferraro debate the answer was yes. Ferraro, "a brassy, sassy, quick-witted and fast-talking on the stump" speaker, followed the advise of her political analysts to "speak more slowly and adopt a much cooler style for the televised encounter."3 For Bush who publicly announced that if he attacked Ferraro in the debate "people [would] think [he's] impolite," declared just prior to the contest that he was no longer concerned about the "woman factor."4

Like Ferraro and Bush, intercollegiate speech participants also should consider gender factors when competing in speaking contests. Intercollegiate debate, the most complicated contest event at speech tournaments, is no exception. Differences in male and female speaking appear very pronounced in debate.5 More men than women participate in debate and men appear to have a competitive edge since male/male or male/female teams generally are more successful than female/female teams.6 Since men appear to have a competitive advantage in debate, an analysis of speaking styles, focusing on the similarities and differences between male and female speech, might offer a partial explanation for the differing success.

This study, then, investigates gender differences in debate. Generally, debate calls for four speakers to engage in argument. One team, consisting of two speakers, affirms the resolution while the other team opposes it. Each speaker in a debate is given four occasions to speak: a constructive speech, in which the speaker presents his/her case; two cross-examination

speeches, one questioning an opponent and one answering an opponent's inquiries; and finally, a refutation speech, in which the debater refutes the opposition and restates his/her own case. We have narrowed our research to focus on the cross-examination speeches in a debate.

Studying the cross-examination speeches of males and females appears to be one of the more effective ways to investigate gender differences in a debate since the theory base for gender differences in speech, including such items as total amount of speaking time, interruptions, hedges, filler, the use of less precise language, and the use of tag questions, is closely tied to the analysis of dyadic conversation. In addition, it allows the researcher to watch the struggle for conversational dominance in the debate. With its direct confrontation between speakers, cross-examination is an excellent behavioral demonstration of relational dominance. Therefore, answers to the questions of whether men or women have greater control over the cross-examination period might be determined by investigating the use of interruptions and the number and type of questions asked during the cross-examination period.

This paper, then, reports the differences between men and women's speech in cross-examination debate in two general areas: the attempt to dominate the interview with interruptions, the attempt to control the interview with specific types of questions. The research we report here is only the first stage of a larger project which ethnographically evaluates the languaging used in academic debate. The paper proceeds as follows: first, a summary of the research on gender differences in interruptions of conversational speech is detailed and then the advise of Forensic scholars on how to conduct a cross-examination is summarized; second, the method used in this study to evaluate gender differences in the cross-examination portion of an intercollegiate debate is outlined; third, the results of the study are summarized; and finally, the limitations of the research and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Interruptions and Cross Examination Debate

Robin Lakoff's influential and provocative work on women's language provided a springboard for research in language and gender differences. In her article "Language and Woman's Place," Lakoff hypothesized that women's speech was different than men's speech.7 She is not alone in that judgment. In fact, women's speech consistently has been described as polite, emotional, talkative, and uncertain, while men's speech has been characterized as direct, rational, illustrating a sense of humor, and strong.8

The differences between men and women's language become readily apparent when studying power relationships between the sexes and the use of interruptions to gain control of the conversation. Generally, it is accepted practice for a man to interrupt a woman but not for a woman to interrupt a man

especially in public. "As the 'superiors,'" wrote Spender, "men are free to do the talking and the interrupting when interacting with women."10 Research supports the position that men interrupt women more often than men interrupt men and that the interruption is a device for exercising power and control in conversation.

According to Scheloff, the basic rule for conversation is one party at a time.11 However, in cross-examination debate this is not always achieved. Speakers who ask questions are forced to interrupt respondents who give lengthy answers or interrupt respondents once the answer they want has been given. Likewise, individuals responding to the questions must interrupt the person asking questions in order to qualify or elaborate on an already given answer. Thus, the rule for conversation, that being one speaker at a time, frequently is violated during debate examination periods. The way individuals manage their turn-taking in cross-examination ultimately affects a critic's perception of a participant's speaking ability. For example, a person who constantly cuts off a respondent may be perceived as being too aggressive, while a person who never cuts off a respondent may be perceived as too passive.

The research on interruptions in conversations is fairly extensive. Goffman and Duncan each have studied turn taking by identifying turn-yielding and attempted turn-suppressing signals in conversation.12 Bernard found that women in a mixed-sex task oriented group have a difficult time in gaining the floor and are more susceptible to interruptions from men.13 Early research by Zimmerman and West found similar results. They reported that in same-sex conversations interruptions were initiated rarely but in cross-sex conversations an asymmetrical relationship was discovered with men initiating a major portion of the interruptions.14 In a follow up study, West and Zimmerman confirmed their previous judgment that a gross asymmetry existed in conversations of cross-sexed groups when they found that ninety-six per-cent of the interruptions were done my males to females.15 Males interrupted the females more in every conversation which West and Zimmerman studied and the findings even held when the subjects previously were unacquainted. The explanation for why men interrupt women more frequently seems difficult to grasp. Two explanations were excluded by West and Zimmerman when they argued in the conclusion of their study that women did not invite interruption by seeming to tolerate it, nor did men interrupt women in order to get a word into the conversation.16

Research by Kennedy,[17] Octigan and Niederman,[18] and Rogers and Jones[19] lend credence to the position that men interrupt women more frequently than women interrupt men. Likewise, Hoffman arrived at a similar conclusion but with the qualification that the sex of the person spoken to was more important than the sex of the speaker.20 Wills and Williams study of conversations in a high school discussion group, a university faculty office, and the cafeteria in a university student union revealed that listeners were more likely to speak

at the same time as a female and that men were more likely to initiate talk while a woman was speaking.21

It is our position that simultaneous speech is a violation of norms regulating conversational exchange. Consistent and repeated interruptions during a cross-examination would indicate dominance of one person over another person. The purpose of this present study was to test three hypothesis with respect to the interruptions in cross-examination debate. First, men would interrupt more than women during the cross-examination period of the debate. Second, when men question women there would be more interruptions than when women interview men. Third, men would be more successful than women in regaining control of the floor through the use of interruptions.

In addition to studying interruptions, we also were concerned with the method of questioning used by the debaters during the cross-examination period of the debate. Forensic educators have not studied gender differences in cross-examination debate in the past. Fuge and Newman22, Henderson23, and Norton24 are the only authors who have addressed strategies of cross-examination in any significant detail in the Speech Communication journals. But none of these authors have included gender issues in their discussions of cross-examination debate.

Authors of debate texts also have ignored the gender issue but have supplied the debater with a list of commandments, the do's and don't's for cross-examination.25 The commandments for cross-examination can be summarized up in a one phrase: "control the witness."26 Several authors have advised the examiner to control the answers of the respondent by asking closed questions, especially leading questions. At the same time, these authors caution the student to avoid open ended questions since these questions would permit the person answering the questions to hold the conversational floor for a significant period of time. As Walter put it, "a leading phrase is like a spoon to put the castor oil of unpleasant facts into a witness's mouth."27 Although Walter was discussing cross-examination in a court room setting, the same advise would hold for cross-examination in academic debate since it is an important illustration of a debater's credibility for many critic-judges.

How the cross-examination is conducted can contribute to or detract from the overall image of the debater in the mind of the critic-judge.28 The use of leading, closed, open, tag, multiple questions or the making of statements instead of just asking questions seems to have particular importance in controlling the cross-examination period. This study, therefore, attempts to fill the gap in our knowledge in the type and use of questions across gender in cross-examination debate by testing three hypothesis. The hypothesis were: first, women would use more open questions than men; second, men would use more closed questions or leading questions than women; third, women would use more tag questions than men. Warrant for these three hypotheses is based on the belief that women are less forceful and dominant in cross-

examination, and thus, would exhibit behavior which was more tentative and less in control, such as asking tag questions or open questions more frequently.

Method

Sample

The cross-examination periods of ten Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) debates were recorded at a Northern California forensic tournament attended by both students from four-year universities and two-year colleges in October, 1984. The debaters all argued the fall 1984 CEDA topic that "The method of conducting the election of the President is detrimental to democracy." The debates recorded were selected randomly from the open division competition.28 Two of the debates were excluded from the final sample because one team in each of those debates had been recorded during an earlier period of the tournament. The sample size, therefore, consisted of thirty-two three-minute cross-examination speeches. Overall, ninety-six minutes of questions and answers were recorded. Twenty-one men and eleven women were included in the final sample.

Procedure

Two individuals, using the taped cross-examination speeches, coded the data and had to agree on the coding before the data was categorized. Two general areas were investigated: interruptions and types of questions. An explanation of each of these areas follows.

Interruptions were coded for both the person asking questions and the person answering the questions. For the purposes of this study, an interruption was defined as the occurrence of simultaneous speech and was assigned to the participant who initiated speech while not possessing the conversational floor.29 Thus, brief utterances such as "yes" or "uh huh" which a listener intersperses during a speaker's pauses were not coded as an interruption. Back channel responses, statements or words that are spoken simultaneous while another person is speaking but are not an attempt to change the conversational floor, were coded in a separate category. A successful speech interruption resulted in a switch of which speaker held the floor. Successful speech interruptions were recorded only for the person who was asking the questions and not for the person answering the questions.

Questions asked by the questioner were coded as either an open question which called for the respondent to give a more extended answer (What is the value of the electoral college?), a closed question which called for the respondent to give a yes/no or a short answer (Do the primaries extend the length of the political campaign?), a leading question in which the person asking the questions phrased a very narrow and specific question (Would the election have resulted in a different person being

elected if one per-cent of the population had changed their vote?), and tag questions in which the person asking questions would add a single phrase onto the end of a declarative sentence (The two party system positively supports democracy. Correct?). In addition, tag questions also were coded as a closed, or leading question depending on how the sentence was phrased. Questions asked by the person being questioned were coded as either clarification questions or questions asking the questioner to give additional information or to rephrase the question (Q. What are the factors which influence voting. A: Well, I don't understand what you mean. What do you mean by factors?), and general questions which were given as an answer instead of a statement (Q: Do you think its fair that the criteria be limited to only one person one vote? A: Do you think its not fair?)

Statistical Analysis

The data were interpreted in two stages. First, the thirty-six cross-examination speeches were divided into two categories: men asking questions, and women asking questions. Then a difference of means test was performed for all six hypothesis. Second, the thirty-six cross examination speeches were divided into four categories: male interviewing male; male interviewing female; female interviewing female; and female interviewing male. Due to small cell sizes only percentages were computed for each of the coded categories for each cell since more reliable statistical procedures could not be used.

Results

Interruptions

The mean ratings for interruptions, on the part of the cross-examiner, are reported in Table 1. As the table indicates, there is an asymmetry in the initiation of interruptions on the part of males. The mean number of interruptions made by males was calculated at 11.2 while the mean number of interruptions initiated by females was only 6.9. A difference of means test was significant at the .05 level. The marked asymmetry, however, becomes more apparent when comparing individual encounters. Interruptions initiated by males ranged from a high of twenty-six to a low of four. Yet interruptions initiated by females reached a high of only eighteen and low of one. These results clearly support the first hypothesis: that men interrupt more than women during a cross-exam period of a debate.

However, affirmation of the second hypothesis, that being when men question women there would be more interruptions than when women interview men, is not quite as clear cut. In a difference of means test no significance could be found even though the mean scores indicated a disproportionate number of male to female interruptions. Yet the findings of this study revealed that in 100% of the cases where men interviewed women and 66.6% of the cases where women interviewed men, it was the male participant who interrupted the most. These findings are

Table 1
Difference of Means Test

Hypothesis	Mean Score Males	Mean Score Females	t-test	df	Sign. Level
1. Men interrupt more than women.	11.2	6.9	1.83	30	.05
2. Men who question women will interrupt more than when women question men.	12.9	7.3	.63	16	NS
3. Men would be more successful in interrupting than women.	Questioner 6.5	3.9	.44	30	NS
	Respondent 8.0	3.0	.73	16	NS
4. Women would use more open questions than men.	3.8	4.9	2.54	30	.01
5. Men would use more closed or leading questions than women.	Closed 7.0	8.0	.18	30	NS
	Leading 3.9	2.6	.375	30	NS
6. Women would use more tag questions.	1.9	3.7	.552	30	NS

Table 2
Interruptions

	Male/ Male	Male/ Female	Female/ Male	Female/ Female
Interruptions	120	116	66	10
Successful Interruptions	81	57	37	6
Number of cases	13	9	9	2

Table 3
Percentage of Types of Questions asked by Questioner

Question	Male/ Male	Male/ Female	Female/ Male	Female/ Female
Total	191	125	137	35
Leading	29.31%	20.89%	16.05%	20.46%
Open	25.65%	25.60%	31.31%	32.42%
Closed	45.00%	49.60%	51.82%	48.37%
Tag	14.13%	10.40%	24.81%	20.00%
Multiple	7.85%	5.60%	7.29%	17.14%
Statement	4.71%	7.20%	6.65%	2.85%
Number of Cases	12	9	9	2

reflective of the "gross asymmetry" West and Zimmerman reported in their study of cross-sex interruptions.30

Perhaps the more interesting note here is that, in a comparison of cross-sex and male-male cells, males tended to interrupt females more than males tended to interrupt males. This statistic seems to hold true not only when the male is asking the questions but also when answering the questions. The mean score of a male examiner interrupting a female respondent hit a high mean of 12.88 while a female examiner interrupted a male respondent only 7.33 times. As a respondent, the males interrupted the female examiner 8.0 times while the male examiner was only interrupted 3.0 times. These findings seem to indicate that a style difference exists, with respect to interruption, when a women enters into the debate.

Most surprising are the results that pertain to the third hypothesis that men would be more successful than women in interrupting and regaining control of the floor. The difference in means test showed no significance, but in addition, an investigation of the percentages of successful interruption in the cross-sex cells also supports the rejection of the hypothesis. The results indicate that females are slightly more successful at interrupting both as an examiner and a respondent. As examiners, women were successful in interrupting 56% of the time, while men were successful only 49.1% of the time. As respondents, women successfully interrupted 50.9% of the time whereas men were successful only 43.9% of the time. These findings seem to support the rule for turn-taking established by Scheloff; one party at a time.31 In following the rules for politeness, a speaker seems to turn the control of the floor over to a person who is an interrupter. It appears that women enjoy a small advantage in this respect perhaps because men give deference to female opponents. One feasible explanation for this unexpected result may be that men change their style in cross-examination so that they do not appear to be brow-beating women in front of a critic-judge. Regardless of the explanation, these findings seem to suggest that if women were to initiate more interruptions their success in gaining control of the conversational floor might parallel their male counterpart.

Types of Questions

A comparison of the mean number of open questions asked by males and females affirms the fourth hypothesis that women use more open questions than men. As Table 1 suggests the mean number of open questions asked by female speakers was 4.9 while the male debater asked a mean of only 3.8 open question. The difference in means test was calculated to be significant at the overlooked. An open question asked by an examiner hardly "controls" the witness. Instead, an open question gives the respondent easy access to the floor. Open questions, therefore, not only can indicate poor use of cross-examination time, but can reduce the effectiveness of the examiner by allowing the respondent significant opportunity to control the cross-

examination period. A critic-judge might be likely to devalue a female debater who spend a third of her time using open question when her male counterpart spends only a fourth of his time on open questions. In fact, both males and females would be better advised to reduce the number of open questions asked during the cross-examination period of a debate.

The fifth hypothesis, that men use more closed or leading questions was not confirmed. However, two conclusions concerning closed and leading questions can be ascertained by investigating the cross-sex and same sex cells. First, it appears that men use more leading questions. The mean number of leading questions for men was calculated at 3.9. Whereas, the mean number of leading questions asked by a women was 2.6. The illustration of this point becomes most noticeable when comparing individual encounters. The number of leading questions asked by any one male examiner reached a high of nine, while only five leading questions were asked by any one female debater. However, a difference of means test showed no significance. The second conclusion concerns the use of closed questions. More closed questions are used when women are involved in the examination period. The mean number of closed questions asked by women is slightly higher than men, 8.00 to 7.00. but a difference of means test found no significance. However, an interesting phenomenon occurred. Men used more closed questions when interviewing a female than when cross-examining a male. The percentage of closed questions used by a male examiner rose from approximately 45% to over 50% when a male respondent was replaced by a female respondent. Thus, it would appear that men might adapt the type of question asked in cross-examination when querying a female opponent.

In a difference of means test the hypothesis that women use more tag question was not confirmed. However, in a comparison of both means and percentages, females used nearly twice as many tag questions as their male counterparts. The mean number of tag questions used by females was figured at 3.6. Whereas, the mean number of tag questions for men was calculated at 1.9. Likewise, in examining percentages, only 12.65% of all questions asked by males were classified as tag questions, yet 23.3% of the questions posed by females fell under the tag question category. Although tag questions are generally leading or closed in nature, they exhibit a more tentative style of speech. Thus, women or men who use tag questions exhibit less control of the questioning in the cross-examination period.

Although we did not hypothesis about either the use of multiple or statement questions, it appears that both sexes should be advised to avoid these type of questions. Good questioning style calls for one question at a time. Multiple questions, therefore are not an effective use of the cross-examination time. Furthermore, statement questions also are an ineffective use of time and usually are perceived as "just talk." Warnings against such statements often are given by judges. Comments such as "Ask questions in CX nothing else, just

questions," or "Don't make arguments in CX, ask quesions" are common criticisms on ballots. Thus, both men and women would do well to heed this advice.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study does not purport to be a definitive answer to how men and women's speech in cross examination debate differs. It is, however, an attempt to determine if differences exist and what effect those differences have for a critic-judge. If a debater wants to maintain control over the structure of the cross-examination period interrupting is necessary because interruptions help manage the interaction between questioner and respondent. In addition, the frequency of interruptions often is correlated positively with the direction of the questioning. Our results suggest that debate training does have some impact on encouraging women to be more forceful and more obtrusive during the cross examination period of a debate which is the opposite of how women currently behave in social conversation. The number of interruptions across gender, although still unequal, is a much lower percentage than what was found by Zimmerman and West in their research.

A variable which affects cross-examination more than gender is the level of debate experience. A more experienced debater, i.e. number of years of participation in debate, generally interrupts more. Also, a more experienced debater uses less open questions and instead, favors leading or closed questions when asking the questions during cross-exam. Level of experience, thus, may be as important as gender in the regulation of the flow of conversation during a cross-examination period.

The current study focussed on interruptions and questioning technique in cross-examination. However, other variables, such as the use of hedges, tentative language, humor, the use of less precise language, and the use of fillers, might prove to be important differences between men and women's speech. Future research could take these other items into account.

The conclusions of this research are limited due to the small sample size. Our research design does have certain advantages, however, in that we ethnographically examined cross-examination conversations rather than just sampling perceptions of individuals. However, larger cell sizes would have allowed us to use more sophisticated statistical tests and certainly would have improved the validity of our conclusions. Even so, the study does provide a beginning point for understanding language differences between the sexes in debate.

Finally, there is one last limitation to this study. Only the verbal responses of the participants in the cross-examination periods were evaluated. No nonverbal dimensions were coded or used. How a question is asked or answered is often times more important than what is asked. Future research should take into account the nonverbal behaviors in debate.

As a result of this study, we feel comfortable making two general conclusions regarding our research: men interrupt women more in cross-examination debate and women use more open questions than men. We hope this initial study will serve as a springboard for more lengthy research into the differences between men and women's speech in Forensics. If women continue to be less successful than men in debate, forensic educators have the responsibility to search out potential explanations for this phenomenon.

End Notes

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[27] Walter, p. 36.

[28] Henderson, p. 118.

[29] Students with more competitive debate experience compete in open division. Students who have not debated before compete in novice division.

[30] West and Zimmerman, "Small Insults," p. 102-117.

[31] Scheloff, pp. 1075-95.

[32] See E. R. "A Systematic Approach to the Measurement of Dominance in Human Face-to-Face Interaction," Communication Quarterly, 28 (1980), 32-43.